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KHORDAD-SAL

from Sr. Pestonji
Panthaki of Bangalore Agiari.

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By

Khurshed Navroji Pavri, B.A. (Hons.)

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nglish Version of the Lecture given at the Parsi Fire-Temple, Bangalore, on 6th September, 1958)

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KHORDAD-SAL

To-day according to the Shehenshahi reckoning of the Parsi Calendar—on Roje Khordad of the month Farvardin—we celebrate the birthday of our holy Prophet Zarathushtra. We call this day "*Khordad-Sal*". We celebrate this day as a day of rejoicing, and we offer our grateful thanks to Ahura Mazda for having produced the Prophet for us. In the *Farvardin Yasht* we say :—

"Ushtano jato Athravayo Spitamo Zarathushtro !"

It means: "Our thanks (to the Almighty) ! An Athravan, *i.e.*, a Prophet, is born for us, and he is Spitaman Zarathushtra."

Our Priests have just now performed the Jashan ceremony in grateful remembrance and in sacred memory of Holy Zarathushtra.

Of all the great religions of the world, Zoroastrianism is the oldest. Zarathushtra lived and propagated his sublime religion about 5000 to 6000 years before the birth of Jesus Christ. At one time the number of the people who professed the Zoroastrian religion could be counted in millions, but through the vicissitudes of time and fortune the number of its followers at present has dwindled down to a little more than one lac in the whole world. However, even at present, in spite of our very small number, Parsi-Zoroastrians do not lack in world-wide fame and reputation. At present we are known, not for the number of our population, but for the magnitude of our achievements in all the fields of life.

The name of the month Farvardin is derived from the word "Farohar" or "Fravashi". Farvardin is therefore the name of the day and the month when we recall to our minds the Farohars of all dead persons and pay our respectful homage to them.

Khordad is the name of one of the seven Ameshaspands. The old Avesta name of Khordad is Haurvatat. This name means 'perfection'. Another meaning of the word is 'health'.

Roje Khordad of the month Farvardin is the auspicious day

of the birth of our holy Prophet Zarathushtra. According to our religious books this day is great and memorable on account of several other happenings, in addition to its being the birthday of Zarathushtra. Some of these events are :—

The first human being to be created by Ahura Mazda on this earth was Gayomard, and this being was created on Roje Khordad of the month Farvardin. According to our books the first human being, Gayomard, was sexless ; that is, the being was neither male nor female.

Ahura Mazda thereafter created a pair or couple of human beings, known in our books as Mashya and Mashyoi, or Mahrih and Mahrianih. The day of their creation was Roje Khordad of the month Farvardin. From this couple of male and female the population of the world grew up.

The first King of Iran, known as Gayomard, or Kayomars, was born on Roje Khordad of the month Farvardin.

King Hoshang of the Peshdadyan dynasty of Iran, who discovered the method of producing fire by rubbing stones or flints, was born on Roje Khordad of the month Farvardin.

On Roje Khordad of the month Farvardin King Tehmuras who is known as Tehmurs Devband, won a victory over Ahreman, and rode on him like a horse.

On Roje Khordad of the month Farvardin King Faridun, who had defeated Zohak and imprisoned him, divided his Kingdom into three parts and distributed them to his three sons.

The day on which King Kai-Khusrav of the Kyani dynasty defeated in battle the Turanian King Afrasiab and killed him was Roje Khordad of the month Farvardin.

It was on Roje Khordad of the month Farvardin that King Kai-Khusrav abdicated his throne and entrusted the kindom of Iran to Lohrasp, and himself disappeared from the world.

The day on which the holy Prophet Zarathushtra acquired from Ahura Mazda knowledge about religion, and on which the Ameshaspands accepted Zarathushtra as the holy Prophet, was Roje Khordad of the month Farvardin.

On Roje Khordad of the month Farvardin King Kai-Gushtasp of the Kyani dynasty of Iran accepted the Religion of Zarathushtra.

The above-mentioned events are some of the memorable happenings in the past connected with Roje Khordad of the month

Farvardin. Some other past events are also mentioned in our books.

As regards the events which are predicted in our books to happen in future, we are told that it will be on Roje Khordad of the month Farvardin at the time of the Day of Judgment or Resurrection that Pehlavan Sam, son of Pehlavan Nariman, will kill Zohak. At the time of the Resurrection Zohak will escape from his bonds and will raise a rebellion. Pehlavan Sam will rise from the dead and will kill Zohak.

The future Prophet Hoshedar will be born on Roje Khordad of the month Farvardin.

The last Prophet Soshyos, in whose time there will be the Resurrection, will be born on Roje Khordad of the month Farvardin.

The day on which the Resurrection will take place will be Roje Khordad of the month Farvardin.

We thus see from the above-mentioned events that Roje Khordad of the month Farvardin, according to our books, is an auspicious, remarkable, and memorable day.

The holy Prophet Zarathushtra was born during the reign of King Kai-Gushtasp of the Kyani dynasty of Iran, 5000 or 6000 years before the time of Jesus Christ. Before King Gushtasp there ruled over Iran the kings of the Peshdadyan dynasty and the early kings of the Kyani dynasty. The religion or faith which was followed in Iran before the advent of Zarathushtra was known as the Mazdayasni or Poiryotkeshi religion. Both words mean "Worship of God". This fact shows that the Iranians even before the time of Zarathushtra believed in one God, or in other words they were strictly monotheistic. It is believed that our three short prayers, *viz., Ashem Vohu, Yatha ahu Vairyo,* and *Yenghahe Hatam*, existed even before Zarathushtra. Similarly there existed before Zarathushtra the religious tenet of putting on the Sudreh and Kusti. According to Firdausi the practice of putting on the Sudreh and Kusti was started during the reign of King Jamshid of the Peshdadyan dynasty.

We learn from our books that after the reign of King Tehmuras a certain amount of deterioration had taken place in the minds of the Iranians regarding religious beliefs and observances. Day by day people were losing their faith in the true spirit of the Mazdayasni religion. Under the influence of outside people, who were enemies of the Mazda-

yasni faith, Iranians were ignoring the true doctrines and tenets of their religion, and were leaning towards the worship of demons and idols and the practice of animal sacrifices with a view to appeasing the demons. King Jamshid had received from Ahura Mazda the inspiration to revive the old Mazdayasni faith in its original true form, but Jamshid busied himself more in efforts for the uplift of the country in arts, science and industry, and on that account Jamshid could not devote his energy and attention to a proper and sufficient extent to attempts to restore the faith of the people in the true spirit of their religion. Later in life Jamshid became conceited and arrogant, and his life came to an end at the hands of Zohak. After Jamshid the Iranians lost more and more their faith in the true tenets and practices of the Mazdayasni religion.

Having seen the miserable plight of religion amongst the Iranians, Zarathushtra decided to revive the Mazdayasni faith in its pristine glory, and he made this object the mission of his life. He sought help from Ahura Mazda, and he tried to understand, and find a solution for, the problematic events—apparent and hidden—in this world and in the next world. At length through Behman, *i.e.*, Good Mind, Zarathushtra acquired all the knowledge and information he sought. Equipped with this knowledge, he began to propagate his faith.

It always happens that when a person desires to introduce a new thing, or wants to reform a thing which is in bad shape, there are many persons to oppose him, and howsoever noble and beneficial the project may be, there are always persons who run it down. Zarathushtra encountered many difficulties in his efforts to propagate his religion, but he continued with his mission by finding a solution for all the difficulties and impediments. Zarathushtra's cousin, Maidyomah, rendered very valuable service and help to him in his mission. The first person in the court of King Gushtasp to accept the faith of Zarathushtra was Asfandiar, son of Gushtasp. Thereafter King Gushtasp and his wife Hutosh, having learnt from Zarathushtra all the principles, tenets and objects of his new faith and having been convinced about their virtues, accepted the Zoroastrian religion. (In his *Shah-Namah* Firdausi refers to Queen Hutosh by the name of Katabun. Our present name Kaitayun is derived from the name Katabun.)

We must remember that Zarathushtra did not entirely reject

the old Mazdayasni religion, but he removed the evil practices and tenets which had crept into it; and in doing so he revived the old Mazdayasni faith in its true spirit. He also introduced many new doctrines, tenets and practices, and gave an entirely new garb to the old faith. He established a new religion by retaining what was good and introducing important new material. He reanimated the primeval faith and made it more comprehensive and consistent.

In our prayer *Jasamay Avangahay Mazda* we often say :—

"Mazdayasno ahmi, Mazdayasno Zarathushtrish fravaranay astutascha fravaraytascha."

It means: "I am a Mazdayasni. As a Mazdayasni Zoroastrian, I like to be an admirer and believer of this religion."

There is a reference to the Mazdayasni faith in the very beginning of the *Din-no Kalmo, i.e.*, the Declaration of Faith, which every child is made to recite at the Navjote ceremony, the ceremony for initiation into the Zoroastrian religion. It says :—

"Rajishtayao chistayao Mazdadhatayo Ashaonyao dainyao Mazdayasnoish."

It means: "May glory be to the good Mazdayasni faith and the righteous and pure knowledge, which is the gift of Ahura Mazda!"

We have now with us only the five *Gathas* out of the books written by Zarathushtra. When Alexander the Great of Greece conquered Iran and overran the whole country, he destroyed the great and valuable library and the museum at Persepolis. The store of knowledge and culture of Iran was thus destroyed. It was revived to some extent in the time of the Sassanian kings by priests and scholars, who from generation to generation had remembered by heart the contents of the old books. When the Arabs conquered Iran, they destroyed our scriptures and religious books, with the result that our old and valuable treasure of knowledge and culture in its entirety is not with us now. What has survived destruction is only a very small part of our old collection.

The main point in the foundation of the Zoroastrian religion is "Ashoi", which means Righteousness. "Asha" or "Ashoi"

is a very powerful weapon against all evil forces. Without the help of "Ashoi" one cannot carry out the noble doctrines of Manashni, Gavashni, Kunashni, or Humata, Hukhta, Huvareshta—*i.e.*, Good Thoughts, Good Words, and Good Deeds. The meaning of our old, small, but noble prayer *Ashem Vohu* is:—Ashoi—Righteousness—is the best gift and happiness. Happiness is unto him who is righteous in the matter of the best Righteousness."

The doctrine of Manashni, Gavashni, Kunashni,—Good Thoughts, Good Words, Good Deeds,—is the very essence or foundation of all Zoroastrian teaching and all Zoroastrian philosophy. The doctrines, tenets and principles of the Zoroastrian religion have their foundation in Truth, Purity, Hygiene, Sanitation, and Cleanliness. They are quite simple, practical, and tolerant enough to be universally acceptable. The code of ethics prescribed in our religious books, which regulates our conduct and our observance of laws, rules and regulations, is quite consistent with common sense and practicability. This code is such that it can be easily understood and put into practice without difficulty. Modern science lends support to the rules and regulations and practices. In short, Purity of Body and Mind is the motto of the Zoroastrian religion.

Moderation in all things—eating, drinking, and all functions of life—is the chief rule of the Zoroastrian religion. To go to the extreme in anything is not desirable. Our religion teaches us that we should lead a simple, moderate, pure, clean and useful life on this earth.

Asceticism has no place in our religion; on the contrary, Zoroastrianism runs down asceticism. Our religion does not teach us that we should quit this mundane life and pass all our time in solitude in constant prayer and meditation on God. Zoroastrianism fosters no faddism. According to our religion the true worship of God consists in living our normal life in this world, following the path of Righteouness—Ashoi—and serving humanity. To live in this world, but to abstain from the evils of this world—there lies our mission; and we can dedicate our life to Ahura Mazda only by fulfilling this mission. Long fasting, self-molestation, self-castigation, sackcloth and ashes have no function in a Zoroastrian's life. Such practices are discouraged and run down in our religion. In the Zoroastrian

religion there does not exist such a class as monks, nuns, ascetics and hermits. Such a class of people is hated in our religion, because they live a life which is not useful in any way to the people of the world and they are mere parasites on society. It is the duty of man to fulfil in moderation all the functions of life ordained by the Almighty for mankind. Zoroastrianism stands for controlling and regulating bodily desires, but not for suppressing and killing them. Some religions forbid their priests to marry, but Zoroastrian priests—Mobeds and Dasturs—do not suffer from such a ban, and they are free to marry and enjoy family life. Our religion teaches us to enjoy moderately and temperately all the good things that Ahura Mazda has been pleased to create for man's enjoyment, and render thanks unto Ahura Mazda for His gift of good things. It is our duty to use for a good purpose the feelings and instincts which Ahura Mazda has created in us, and to live a good, pure life which is useful to others. There is a maxim in the Latin language which says, "Mens sana in corpore sano", which means "A sound mind in a sound body". This maxim aptly states in short the Zoroastrian doctrine of living this earthly life.

Zoroastrianism does not accept the theory of reincarnation or rebirth. The Zoroastrian belief is that man has to live only one life on this earth. Christianity, Judaism, and Islam also hold the same belief. It is said that the early Aryans, before they separated into two groups, *viz.*, the Iranians and the Hindus, believed in the theory of one life. This view began to change in the later part of the Vedic period in the minds of the people who had settled in India. The Zoroastrian religion does not subscribe to the theory of Karma or rebirth, which lays down that the ideal of life cannot be realised within the limits of one life, and that many lives are required upon earth to enable the soul to gain emancipation through purification in a cycle of rebirths. According to this theory of Karma freedom from the chain of births is the goal of the soul, and this chain is elongated or shortened by one's own actions. Our religious books do not preach this theory, but tell us that there is only one life on earth, which, after death, attains completion in the next world. The earthly life is in the nature of a test, and the harvest of good or evil deeds in this world is to be reaped here as well as in the next world. It is therefore incumbent on us to live a good, moral, and righteous

life on this earth. It is said in our religious books that in the time of the last Prophet Soshyos there will be the Resurrection or Day of Judgment. The souls of all men and women, from the primeval being to the last person, will again come to life and will be given back their respective bodies. Final Judgment will be meted out in the form of reward or retribution. This world will be destroyed, and a new world will spring up. Evil will totally disappear, and the entire creation in the new world will become virtuous and immortal; but there will be no further begetting of children. This is the belief of the Zoroastrian religion. Some other religions preach the theory of reincarnation or rebirth according to one's deeds in the previous birth. Thus there is a significant difference between the Zoroastrian belief and the belief of some other religions on this question of life after death. The question has been discussed for hundreds of years, but a convincing answer to the question is yet to be found.

The problem of the existence of evil in this world has baffled all attempts of the sages, philosophers and religionists of all time to find a satisfactory solution. Various theories have been advanced as to how and why evil exists in the world. The Zoroastrian religion tells us that there are two Spirits or Forces, *viz.*, Spenta Mainyu—meaning the Holy or Good Spirit or Force—, and Angra Mainyu—meaning the Evil or Bad Spirit or Force. The belief in the existence of these two Spirits or Forces has led non-Zoroastrians to level against Zoroastrianism the charge of belief in what they term dualism, *i.e.*, the belief in the doctrine of two creators. Some Western scholars think that Spenta Mainyu is Ahura Mazda, and Angra Mainyu is Ahreman, and that they are in conflict with each other. But the fact is not so. Zoroastrianism is strictly and absolutely monotheistic, and Ahura Mazda is the supreme Godhead. According to the doctrine of our religion, Ahura Mazda Himself has created the two Forces, -Spenta Mainyu, Goodness, or the Force of Development or Growth, and Angra Mainyu, Evil, or the Force of Decline or Destruction. Spenta Mainyu represents the creative or constructive attribute of God, and Angra Mainyu represents the destructive powers of God. They are indispensable and necessary to each other in the creation and conduct of the universe. The constant conflict between the two forces may be

said to be the test of mankind. Man is judged according to his good or bad deeds in this world, which are the result of his success or failure respectively to resist the evil influence exercised by Angra Mainyu. Spenta Mainyu may be compared with the soul of man, and Angra Mainyu may be compared with the passions arising in the earthly body of man. The test of man consists in his efforts to fight against the evil passions created by Angra Mainyu and to stand firm by the side of Spenta Mainyu or his own soul. The fundamental duty or mission of man in this life is to resist and fight against evil, and the salvation of the soul can be attained by success in this fight. Neither the Prophet Zarathushtra nor anyone else is going to take upon himself the consequences of our deeds, good or bad. We ourselves have to enjoy or suffer the fruits of our actions ; and our soul can obtain salvation or peace as a return for our actions on this earth. Purity of body and mind, and service of the people of the world, and good deeds,—in other words, the true path of Righteousness,—therein lies the duty and mission of this worldly life, and therein lies the discomfiture of Angra Mainyu. In short, we may say that he lives his life best upon earth who lives in Righteousness and for Righteousness. Zarathushtra tells us in the *Ahunavad Gatha* :—

> " O men, know and learn the principles fixed by Ahura Mazda regarding happiness and suffering,—and these principles are that wicked and sinful persons will have to suffer pain for a long time, and righteous persons will reap the benefits which will bestow happiness upon them."

Further. in the *Vahishtoist Gatha* we are told :—

> " O you men and women ! Openly discard the path of falsehood and the spread of falsehood. Remove from your bodies the connection with falsehood. Greatness coupled with disrespect and disgrace is disastrous to mankind. You bring harm to your life in the spiritual world by your association with wicked persons who destroy truth."

We, Zoroastrians, pay homage to Ameshaspands and

Yazads, and remember them with reverence and honour. But we do not consider them to be deities or gods. There are the Elements of Nature, such as the Sun, Moon, Water, Fire, Wind, etc., and we consider that each Ameshaspand or Yazad represents and rules over one particular element. Some Yazads represent some particular creation of Ahura Mazda. We pay homage to Ameshaspands and Yazads as the elements or Attributes of Ahura Mazda, and we do not worship them as several deities or gods. We pay reverential homage to Fire and hold it as sacred, but we do not worship Fire as a god or as an idol. We revere Fire and pay our respectful homage to it only as an Element or Attribute of God, or as a Symbol of Light, which is an Element of God. Some people believe that since we hold Fire as sacred, we Zoroastrians worship Fire as a god, but this belief is incorrect. Firdausi, the author of the *Shah-Namah*, must have heard of such a belief, and that is why he says in one place in his famous epic :—

" Mapendar ke Atash parastan budand,
Parastandeye Pak Yazdan budand."

i.e., " Do not think that they (Zoroastrians) were worshippers of Fire ; they were worshippers of Pak Yazdan (the Holy God)."

Further, we do not worship Zarathushtra as a Divine Incarnation. We honour him and pay our reverential homage to him only as a Prophet, as the holy man who brought to us the Message from Ahura Mazda.

It is now 7000 or 8000 years since the Prophet Zarathushtra propagated his religion. In spite of its antiquity, there are still persons who profess the Zoroastrian faith, and who strictly follow the doctrines, principles and practices preached by Zarathushtra. This fact amply proves that although it is noble and sublime, the Zoroastrian religion is simple, practical and rational. Its doctrines, principles, rules and regulations are eternally true, simple and practicable even in the present age of science.

From early times down to the present day, scholars and philosophers of different religions and different races and communities have written innumerable books and articles on the subject of the Prophet Zarathushtra and his teachings. Amongst the very early writers, Herodotus, Pliny, Strabo and Plutarch are

well known. Greek, Roman, Hebrew, Christian, Indian, Arab, and Chinese writers have studied and fully discussed the doctrines and tenets of Zoroastrianism. The Zoroastrian religion exercised a considerable influence on the Hebrew religion of the Prophet Moses. Amongst the various articles of faith which the Hebrews accepted from Zoroastrianism there are three outstanding ones, *viz.* (1) the principle of monotheism, (2) the belief in the theory of one life on this earth, and (3) the belief in the Resurrection or Day of Judgment. In the Old Testament of the Bible we find several references to Iranian kings, especially Cyrus, Xerxes, and Darius of the Achaemenian dynasty. At a later date Christianity and Islam adopted these three beliefs as articles of faith. Greek and Roman philosophy and culture are based to some extent on the principles of Zoroastrianism. Other religions and communi. ties have adopted as their own the Zoroastrian tenet of offering homage to the Sun, Moon, Fire, Water, Wind, etc., as Elements of Nature or Attributes of God.

During the last two centuries scholars and religionists of Europe and America, such as Thomas Hyde, Anquetil du Perron, Darmesteter, Martin Haug, Geiger, Bartholomae, Max Muller, Dr. West, Dr. Mills, Prof. Jackson and others have studied and written a large number of books on the Zoroastrian religion, and they have expressed nothing but immense praise and appreciation of the tenets and doctrines of Zoroastrianism. European scholars and orientalists, like Grotofend, Lassen and Henry Rawlinson, succeeded in deciphering the cuneiform inscriptions on the hills and palaces of ancient Iran of the Achaemenian period, which had remained undeciphered until the nineteenth century. The cuneiform writings have brought to the knowledge of the world the glorious period and the wonderful achievements of the mighty kings Cyrus, Xerxes and Darius; and the art, science and culture of Iran of that era have become known to the world to a much greater extent than before.

The contribution of Zoroastrianism towards the culture, arts, civilisation and literature of several countries of the world is not small. A country's morals, philosophy, laws, social customs and literature chiefly depend upon its religion, because it is religious thought which influences these spheres of life and imparts to them the important bend or turn which characterises them. From ancient times till the conquest of Iran by the

Arabs the country had wide contacts and connections with various countries and different races, and on that account the religious philosophy, culture, arts and literature of Iran could not but exert a salutary and beneficial influence on the people of these countries and races. It is said that when Alexander the Great conquered Iran, there existed two copies of all our books and scriptures. One copy of the collection, which was destroyed by Alexander, was in Persepolis, and it was called Dazh-i-Nipisht, meaning "Fort of Documents". The other copy had been deposited in another place, and it was called Ganj-i-Shapigan, meaning "Royal Treasure House". The latter copy is said to have been sent to Greece by Alexander, and it was translated into the Greek language. Thus the Greeks became acquainted with the writings of Iran; and from Greece the knowledge spread to other countries of Europe. Neither the original Avesta writings nor the Greek translations exist now.

The noble and sublime faith of Zarathushtra has weathered the heaviest of storms and passed through the crucible of the most crushing persecutions. During the long period of 7000 or 8000 years the Zoroastrian religion has experienced various vicissitudes, but it has come out triumphant from each ordeal. No doubt there are only a few followers of Zarathushtra now in India and Iran. They are now a microscopic minority as compared with the followers of other great religions of the world. Yet the very fact that the religion established by Zarathushtra thousands of years ago still flourishes and that there are still staunch followers of the faith goes to prove that the principles, doctrines and tenets of the faith and the mode of good, moral living based on Manashni, Gavashni, Kunashni are eternally true and ever enduring.

In spite of the very small population, even now the name Parsi Zoroastrian is well known in the world. We have attained a great reputation through our qualities of head and heart. After the Parsis settled down in India, they earned a name and reputation for themselves in trade, commerce, industry, arts, politics, etc. The Parsi community can justly be proud of its achievements in every walk of life. "Charity, thy name is Parsi" has become a well-known saying. In spite of their small number, Parsis have donated large sums of money for cosmopolitan

charities for the benefit of all communities without distinction of caste or creed. No other community in India, in spite of its numbers, can rank equal with the Parsis in this respect. Parsis have rendered noble service to the people of the country of their adoption by their charity and their advancement in every field of life; and in doing so they have followed and acted upon the noble and sublime principles taught by Zarathushtra. With their strong faith in the noble and sublime traditions of Zoroastrianism Parsi-Zoroastrians will ever remain ready and prepared to withstand firmly and overcome any difficulties which may confront them in future and will keep the banner of the religion of Zarathushtra ever flying.

Now I shall conclude my lecture with the Avesta words from *Jasamay Avanghahay Mazda :—*

> "Ya haitinamcha bushiayintinamcha majishtacha, vahishtacha, srayeshtacha ya Ahuirish Zarathushtrish."

i.e., "Amongst all the religions which exist at present and which will come to life in future, the religion which is the greatest, the best and the noblest of them all is the Zoroastrian religion of Ahura Mazda."

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